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FRENCH SOCIALISM TODAY

I

PARLIAMENTARY SOCIALISM

A study of French socialism as it exists today is a study of a very complicated situation. The deeper it is penetrated the more involved does it appear. There is political socialism, a matter of four or five parties; there is syndicalism, appearing in connection with the syndicates or trade unions; there is Christian Socialism, a feeble growth of which little is heard; finally, there are the tendencies of a group of men, high in the parliamentary life of the country, who have been "read out" of the socialist body or have detached themselves from it, but who are, nevertheless, generally regarded as Socialists.

Apart from the Christian Socialists, whose influence appears *nil*, all kinds of combinations and contacts have taken place between these groups. New alignments have been continually occurring and have taken place so rapidly, coincident with changes in the general political life of France, that they suggest the capricious shuffling of cards in a deck rather than the sober working-out of cause and effect.

The purpose of this study is to show the position of the French socialist groups today; how French socialism has come to its present position, and in what direction it appears to be tending. The method employed will be (1) a rapid survey of French socialism before 1905; (2) an exposition of the views of the present leaders of French socialism; (3) a sketch of syndicalism and of its rise; (4) finally, a consideration of the events, political and economic, which have operated in the last four years to alter the position and modify the theory of the socialistic groups, and a brief survey of their present position and tendencies.

The Socialist party did not gain any considerable following in France until after 1890, although a socialist paper made its appearance in 1878, and in 1879 Jules Guesde founded the

Socialist Labor party. In 1889 socialism polled a vote of 90,000; in 1891, a vote of 549,000. In 1893 it elected 50 members to the French Chamber of Deputies and thus entered the lists as a great political party.

In 1899 A. Millerand, with the approval of Jean Jaurès, who had virtually become leader of the parliamentarians, entered the coalition cabinet of Waldeck-Rousseau. This was the first time in the world's history (barring Louis Blanc) that a socialist had attained to such a prominent position in government. Millerand's entrance into a bourgeois government, however, caused sharp dissensions within the party. Jules Guesde, the founder, differed from Jaurès, and the party split, the Guesdists withdrawing with about one-quarter of the deputies. Guesde carried the question to the International Congress at Amsterdam in 1904. There Jaurès defended his course, but victory lay with Kautsky, who took the opposite side. Millerand was finally "read out" of the party, but is still an important figure in French politics.

The sense of the Amsterdam Convention was that the French Socialists should sink their differences and unite into a single party. As Jaurès bowed to the decision of the International Congress this was possible. The party reunited and is now known as the Unified Socialist party of France. It is made up of four or five sections, the largest of which is the Independents, led by Jaurès. Other sections are the Marxists, led by Jules Guesde, the Allemanists, led by Jean Allemane, and the Blanquists. The Allemanists are opportunists, the Blanquists go back to the communes of 1879 and are revolutionary. Chief interest lies, however, with the Independents and Guesdists. The other groups are within the party, but it will not be necessary to trace their evolution separately.

In the French Chamber the Socialist party occupies the extreme left. The remainder of the left is composed of the radicals and social-radicals, a group which has formed the *bloc*, or at least the larger part of it, with irregular support from the Socialists. As early as 1899 this *bloc* began accepting social measures for the extreme or Socialist left. On the right and in the center are the Conservatives, the Progressives, and the

Royalists, who, through this policy, have been in opposition now for ten years.

II

The Marxists, under Guesde, are the radicals of the socialist group. They occupy the very left of the Chamber. Gabriel Hanotaux gives this vivid sketch of their leader:

Jules Guesde is the veritable creator of French socialism. He has been on the bridge since the war and the Commune. One might say that he made the party that day when he pleaded for himself and his first adherents, in September, 1878, and when he got at the same time his first condemnation and his first notoriety. Jules Guesde has polemical gifts of value, he is a sober orator, he possesses a nature energetic and resolute, a deep insight, and an unbending spirit. His lean body, his thin face, his flowing black beard, his fixed and piercing look, the I know not what of fervor and fire which emanates from him, reveal the unquietude of the apostle!¹

So much for the man. As to his theoretical position, it has been said that Guesde is a theorist first and a parliamentarian afterward. His views on socialism are orthodox, but "none of his friends would ever dream of letting him decide, should his party triumph, how the details of his creed were to be put into practice." In parliament his attitude has been one of protest against the existing order. The position he has assumed is analogous to that taken by the Irish in the House of Commons. On matters of general policy he votes against Briand, the present premier. It was due to him rather than to any other man that the International Congress in 1904 was brought to debate the position of Millerand. He believes in the practical program of Marx—waiting until the Socialist party has secured a majority and then seizing the government.

His views are shown clearly in his attitude toward the old-age and workmen's pension law passed last year. This bill provides pensions from a fund to which the employees are to contribute 9,000,000 francs, the employers the same amount, and the state 120,000,000 francs. During a strenuous syndicalist agitation against the bill Guesde was silent, but shortly before the day set for the final vote he moved an amendment to strike out the

¹ Gabriel Hanotaux, *La démocratie et le travail* (1910), Introd., ix.

provisions for workingmen's contributions. This motion was supported by only 27 votes, representing the extreme wing of the socialist group. Guesde, speaking to his motion, denounced the bill as a crime against the working class, and when the vote was finally taken voted against it.

Guesde is strongly opposed to syndicalism, which would dispense with political action. When the question was raised at the Limoges Socialist Congress in 1906 he offered the following motion, which may be taken as typical of his position in this connection :

It is the same class, the same proletariat, which organizes and acts, both in the economic field through its unions, and in the political field through its Socialist party; and if these two methods of action and organization cannot be blended, they cannot ignore one another without mortally dividing the proletariat against itself; the circumstances therefore require that the trade unions [*syndicates*] and political actions of the workers should be in concert and unison.

This motion was defeated by a motion presented by Jaurès more specifically recognizing the status of the Syndicalists.

Guesde is also a sworn enemy of anti-patriotism. He believes one ought to be ready to march to the frontier with the ardor of the volunteers of 1893, in the war for the safety of the revolution which ought not to break out until the victory has been won. True to this position, he would hunt out the Anarchists and Hervéists, or followers of the extremist Hervé, whose methods he believes would lead to ruin. He thinks little of the general strike; the victory, he believes, must be won politically.

Such is the substance of M. Guesde's doctrine. He is the creedalist of the party. He is the narrow, uncompromising propagandist who has formed French socialism on the basis that Marx laid down, and from that basis he would not depart. There is no denying that he is the father of French socialism, but events have shown that it has outgrown his tutelage.

III

If M. Guesde is the father of French socialism, M. Jaurès has been its great leader. Learned, eloquent, supple, while still

a young man he has gained for himself an international reputation.

His ingenuity in negotiation, his resources in exposition, have saved the situation more than once and secured for him thanks and applause. And then how they love to hear him! It is he and he alone who knows how to modulate the complaint, the song of hope capable of piercing the hearts of men who suffer, and who, even if they talk of hatred and of destruction, yet seek for an order and a religion.

Jaurès belongs to the school or type of Millerand, Briand, and Viviani, but his loyalty to the Socialist party has never faltered. In 1904, when Kautsky carried the International Congress against him on the question of supporting a bourgeois government, he submitted to its ruling, and, whatever it may have cost him personally, he detached himself from the *bloc* after the fall of the Combes ministry.

Jaurès sees but two parties, the party of the revolution and the party of the counter revolution. The revolution is a process of development begun by those who claimed political rights in 1789, and continued by those who have claimed social and economic rights for them ever since. Extreme Marxists like Guesde and Vaillant (who is on the International Committee) do not take this view. To them a moderate liberal Republican is a natural enemy and the tool of capitalism; to Jaurès he is a natural ally and in a sense the tool of socialism, because in giving his best efforts to maintain republican institutions, he is strengthening the foundations without which socialism must remain a purely utopian ideal.²

Jaurès' book confirms this view. Jaurès looks for the gradual socialization of the state. He sees this taking place by a peaceful evolution.

In the present state of humanity, where our only organization is on the basis of nationality, social property will take the form of national property. . . . For a long time to come, the nation, as such, will furnish the historical setting of socialism; it will be the mold in which the new justice will be cast. . . . In the nation the rights of all individuals are guaranteed today, tomorrow, forever. . . . We Socialists, when we undertake to break up and gradually absorb capitalist property, will often find that we can direct the social movement toward the collectivist form by simply developing certain practices of bourgeois society and hastening the forward march of our legislation in the paths along which it has already begun to move.

² Introd. to Jaurès' *Studies in Socialism*, by M. Minturn.

Jaurès argues that the Socialists can best work by accelerating those socialistic tendencies exhibited in the legislation of modern France. He declares that Socialists have partially attained to power and that logically they must assist in the carrying-on of government to that degree. He finds sanction for his view in the attitude of Liebknecht, the German leader, who, he argues, contemplated a partial assumption of power by the Socialists, such an assumption as that made by the entrance into the cabinet of Millerand.

The program of the Tours Congress in 1902, when the Guesdists were in a state of alienation from the main party, shows how Jaurès had imposed his views on the party :

The Socialist party defends the republic as a necessary means of liberation and education. Socialism is essentially republican. It might even be said to be the republic itself, since it is the extension of the republic to the régime of property and labor. . . . The Socialist party, rejecting the doctrine of all or do nothing, has a definite program.

The program of the Tours Congress, indeed, shows Jaurès' breadth of view. It includes direct suffrage for all; proportional representation; initiative, referendum, and recall; the full administrative autonomy of the communes; the abolition of the presidency and the Senate; the secularization of schools; the free administration of justice; removal of disabilities of women and natural or adulterine children; free civic, technical, and higher education; progressive taxation; the protection of the workers and the regulation of industry; social insurance, and international peace. It thus appears that Jaurès contemplates a state with institutions akin to the present, but democratized to the widest degree. It is democracy applied to industrial and social life.

Jaurès and Guesde have never agreed on tactics. Jaurès is for action—for parliamentary action or other action—for the actual securing of socialistic measures as the opportunity occurs to get them. He has a preconception that the smoothest way is through negotiations or through working with the dominant party. Guesde also would have those reforms, but Guesde would exact them at the point of the sword, carrying them by an actual socialist majority in the Chamber.

Jaurès' theoretical position since 1904 has scarcely been tenable. The Amsterdam Congress virtually condemned it. He had to take his choice between breaking with the Socialists and thereby disrupting the French national Socialist party, and relinquishing any aspirations which he might have cherished to become a minister of the French republic in a *bloc* government. The latter course meant giving up the opportunity of bringing about some of the reforms he had so ably championed. He chose it, however, and has since marked time in the Chamber. One example will illustrate his position: Earlier in his career he had been elected vice-president of the Chamber. In 1906, in accord with his new attitude, he refused to be a candidate again. By such acts he has gradually disentangled himself from the ruling group of Socialist radicals.

Jaurès thus presents a case of arrested progress. Logically his position would bring him into a coalition cabinet, but Guesde and his Marxism have made this impossible. Consequently his feats of leadership have been not along constructive lines, but rather along the line of keeping the various elements of a party of protest from falling apart.

A recent deliverance shows that he still clings to the notion of a peaceful evolution, but that his ideal of state or society-to-be has come closer to the ideal presented by the Syndicalists. In 1906 Clémenceau challenged Jaurès to drop his critical attitude and to lay down a constructive program. Jaurès responded. He outlined broadly the socialization of the great institutions of society, of production and exchange. In concluding he said: "You may do it without disorder, without violence, without spoliation, without confiscation. You may do it by legal and social means which are now at your disposal." The social transformation which he contemplated, he said, was to be brought about by greater reliance upon labor clubs, chambers of communes, and other voluntary institutions.

General organs of administration will be created which will co-ordinate these progressive efforts and will at the same time leave, in each department of labor, under the general rules of equity, a great amount of independence and autonomy to the co-operative and local groups, in such a way that the

activity and initiative of each one will be stimulated under the general rule of sovereign labor.

Just how this beautiful end is to be consummated French critics have not failed to inquire.

IV

We may at this point consider the position of M. Millerand, although he is no longer officially a member of the national Socialist party of France. Millerand was a leader of the independent Socialists before he became a cabinet minister. At a banquet at Saint-Mandé in 1896 he outlined his policy. Just as in Jaurès so in Millerand's statements appears the implication that the Socialist must work with other parties. "A Socialist," he says, "is one who harbors the earnest desire to secure for every being in the bosom of society the unimpaired development of his personality." This implies conditions—"first, individual appropriation of things necessary for the security and development of the individual, i.e., property, security, liberty; second, co-operative action." This ideal, according to Millerand, is not to be obtained by simply agitating and waiting until the government is captured, horse, foot, and artillery. "Men do not and will not set up collectivism; it is setting itself up daily; it is, if I may be allowed the phrase, being secreted by the capitalist régime." "Whoever does not admit the necessary and progressive replacement of capitalistic property by social property, is not a socialist." There is occurring "the incorporation of the great industries, one after another, in the body of social property." "No Socialist has ever dreamed," he declared, "of transforming the capitalistic régime, instantaneously, by a magic wand, nor of building up on a *tabula rasa* an entirely new society."

Here Millerand differs from Guesde, who conceives of the capitalist régime working itself out until the state is absolutely ready to be transformed, at which time the country, by its votes, will say to the Socialists: "Come, for all things are ready." Millerand logically followed his policy when in 1899 he took office under Waldeck-Rousseau. Here he exerted his influence along socialistic lines. For example, he introduced and got passed a

bill securing a normal 10-hour day. Among other measures he obtained one which recognized the unions and the federation of unions of employees of the state itself. Until 1905 he continued to be a member of the Socialist party.

But he was heavily involved in difficulties. As minister, he sat at the same board as General Galliffet, who was *persona non grata* to the Socialists. As minister, he was obliged to receive the Czar, the typical autocrat, when he came to Paris. As minister, he voted against his party on three occasions: (1) on a resolution to abolish the state grants for public worship; (2) on a resolution to prosecute Socialists who had issued a book held subversive of military discipline; (3) on a resolution inviting the foreign minister to make proposals regarding international disarmament. Therefore, Millerand was judged by the party. The Congress at Bordeaux, 1903, was fully occupied discussing him. Millerand was attacked by the Guesdists, and defended by Jaurès and Sarraute. The result was a compromise motion. It affirmed the necessity of the party's political representatives, "to uphold by their votes the traditions of the Socialist party"; and it "takes note of the declaration made in this sense by Citizen Millerand." Guesde, as already related, then carried the question to Amsterdam where he scored against Millerand even more decisively than against Jaurès.

Briand, the present French premier, is another eminent statesman, who is called a Socialist, but who has been excommunicated by the regular Socialist party. Briand was sent to parliament in 1902 by the miners of St. Etienne. He became a minister under Clémenceau, and when the latter lost power succeeded him. Viviani, another Socialist, has a seat in his cabinet.

The response of the party to this double elevation to office was the following motion passed at Limoges the same year:

The congress, considering that any change in the personnel of a capitalist government could not in any way modify the fundamental policy of the party, puts the proletariat on its guard against the insufficiency of a program, even the most advanced, of the democratic bourgeoisie; it reminds the workers that their liberation will only be possible through the social ownership of capital, that there is no socialism except in the Socialist party, organized and unified, and that its representatives in parliament, while

striving to realize the reforms which will augment the power of action and satisfy the demands of the proletariat, still maintain the reality and integrity of the socialist ideal, in unceasing opposition to all restricted and too often illusory programs.

Briand's attitude may be presented in his own words on reforms: "Reforms cannot be carried out by violence. Reforms are not fruitful unless they are carried out in a country prosperous and peaceful. Private or collective interests shall not prevail against national interests." Accordingly his ministry, following the path blazed out by Millerand, has put into effect a great number of practical reforms. A comprehensive scheme of social insurance has been developed. His program also includes a revision of the income tax, and he is favorable to proportional representation. Yet, throughout, the attitude of the Socialist party has been hostile, and Briand cannot rely upon their support. Thus socialism has lost, by its uncompromising attitude, Millerand, Briand, and Viviani, and it has stultified Jaurès. This drain upward has left the party ineffective.

V

To summarize the policy of political socialism: When Jules Guesde was the uncontested head of the party it was actively hostile to all government. It was "waiting to possess itself of the power to make over the world to its own taste." After the split the party, under the leadership of Millerand and Jaurès, was opportunist and believed in working with radical governments to achieve its ends. Guesde reimposed his policy upon the unified party but it still shows trace of opportunist policy. It will support the government in isolated cases. This is due to the leadership of Jaurès. Jaurès, however, is forced by the creedalists of his party to accept the rôle of a critic of the existing administration, although his own predilection is for co-operation with it. Within the party, too, there is a violent wing which reflects the prevalent syndicalism. Jaurès has been able to hold this down to some extent. Thus, because of the conflict between personal tendencies and party conditions, his leadership is hesitating and ambiguous.

In the large, all branches of political Socialists have relied on a policy of penetration. To Guesde, the agitator, it appears that when the doctrines of socialism have penetrated to the consciousness of all workers they will unite and elect enough Socialist deputies to capture the government. To Jaurès, fundamentally, penetration is not merely the getting of ideas into men's minds, but is also the getting of socialistic principles into the slowly changing social constitution. One corporation after another, one institution after another, will be socialized. Briand, Millerand, and Viviani are of the same temper, but they have chosen to break with the Socialist party rather than to play simply the rôle of destructive critics of the present order.

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